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## Managing Spirituality in Solving Family Issues

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### Abstract

The decreasing of religious values and the occurrence of conflicts in the family institution are contributing to the existence of social diseases of today. These situations has led to the need for proper treatment in solving family issues. In the Malaysian context, Western approaches have been used for quite some time in the arena of counselling. Apparently, some Western approaches are found inappropriate for local culture with strong traditional Asian roots. Each person carries a set of values and beliefs that may aid in their well-being. There is no denying that religious discussions and spirituality management within therapy can be essential for treatment because Islam provide its followers guidance and procedures on how to live in this world. This paper will examine the religious counselling and spirituality management in solving family issues. This study is also to explore and evaluate the effectiveness of family counselling process by implementing religious values and spirituality management in solving family issues. Furthermore, this study also look into the selected professional counsellors who are involved directly in family counselling on their views and stances in implementing and including the religious values during their sessions with clients.

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### 1. Introduction

The decreasing of religious values and the occurrence of conflicts in the family institutions are contributing to the existence of social diseases today. This situation has caused many conflicts in human lives and rendered the need professional counselling service.

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In the Malaysian context, Western approaches in counselling have been used for quite some time. Apparently, these Western approaches are deemed not to be suitable for local culture with strong traditional Asian roots. Each person carries a set of values and beliefs that may aid in their well-being. Thus, there is no denying that spiritual management or religious discussions within therapy can be essential for treatment because Islam provide its followers guidance and procedures on how best to live in this world.

Islamic counselling has long been discussed in our country, (Baharom, 1989). Unfortunately, there are a number of Muslim counsellors or therapists who seem to be afraid to fully practise the Islamic counselling, whereas they are more comfortable with the theory, principles and methods of counselling highlighted by the West.

## 2. Objectives of the Study

The main aim of this study is to explore and evaluate the effectiveness of spirituality in solving family issues. Furthermore, this study also seeks to look into the selected professional counsellors who are involved directly in family counselling on their views and stances in implementing and including the religious values during their sessions with clients.

## 3. Design of the Study

The method used in this study was interview. The subjects of the study were five professional counsellors were the subjects of this study. They worked in different settings and locations. These structured interviews were conducted on the subjects in three different areas such as in Kuala Lumpur, Selangor and Negeri Sembilan.

## 4. Findings

This part will discuss the findings of the research. The findings are qualitative in nature and will look into family issues faced by the respondents.

### 4.1 Family Issues

Various family issues were presented by the clients of the subjects, ranging from common to serious and extreme. For the purpose of this study, six main themes were chosen which were the themes of marriage, children, health, religion, cyber sex addiction and lesbian, gay, bisexual, and transgender (LGBT). The findings showed that marriage topped the list of family issues faced by the clients of the subjects. Subsequently, the problems of children, religion, health, cyber sex addiction and LGBT also affected and disturbed the harmony of the family institutions.

For example, pertaining to the marriage issue, participant C said,

*"Communication issues, secondly; responsibility issues and thirdly; sexual issues were three main issues faced by the clients"*

While, participant B said,

*"misunderstanding between husband and wife usually started small. As the couple have no skills to deal with marital conflict, the issues becomes bigger."*

Cybersex addiction also contributed to the issues faced by the subjects' clients and has created the need for counselling treatment as participant B mentioned,

*"Cyber sex addiction has caused a few of my clients to divorce"* Participant E faced worrying problems in sexual misconduct among his clients, *"For family issues, many of my clients are teenagers who are facing on sexual misconducts or problems. Perhaps they were referred to me because my research is on adolescent sexual misconducts. Most of them are involved in physical and cyber sex."*

The appearance of HIV issues among family members also lead to the disturbance in the cohesion and harmony of a family. Participant A said,

*"I also have cases of HIV clients that could be considered as extreme cases"* while participant C said, *"There were also transgender cases, clients with HIV who wanted to get married..."*

Religious issues such as deviation may also affect the family institution as stated by participant D, *“When I become a prosecutor, I have been involved with cases like prosecution of khalwat, deviationist teachings and so on”*.

While, participant A said,

*“The most unique case that I could still remember, was a client who did not believe in any religion*

#### 4.2 Managing Spirituality in Solving Family issue

Family issues need to be treated to produce harmonious society. One of the treatment that is commonly used in solving family issues is through managing spirituality. Somayya Abdullah (2009) stated that Islamic approach was appropriate in treating family issues as it provides a broad purpose with an overarching intent of helping clients to attain positive change in their lives. A few surveys conducted by Gilligan and Furness (2005) found that qualified social work practitioners and students indicated a need of social work education and practice to focus attention both on the importance of religious and spiritual beliefs in their lives.

A qualitative study using the concept of *al-Hikmah*, *Mau'izatul Hasanah* and *Mujadalah* were being applied in counselling sessions at one of the religious centre and has proved to be relevant and necessary (Salasiah, 2008) in treating family issues.

Wahida (2003) has run a study on Muslim families using a Solution Focused Therapy (SFT) and found that aspects of SFT were mostly adopted from the Quranic concepts. This is to be expected as the Quran presents itself as a “guide” from the One Creator of all things to humanity, through a representative of Allah (Quran 6:165), who is the trustee of free will (Quran 18:20), and who is under moral obligation to change him/herself and society to create a just and morally balanced world (Quran 3:110).

*“And it is He who has made you successors upon the earth and has raised some of you above others in degrees [of rank] that He may try you through what He has given you. Indeed, your Lord is swift in penalty; but indeed, He is Forgiving and Merciful”*(Surah al-‘An‘am, 6:165)

*“Indeed, if they come to know of you, they will stone you or return you to their religion. And never would you succeed, then - ever.”*(b(Surah al-Kahf, 18:20)

*“You are the best nation produced [as an example] for mankind. You enjoin what is right and forbid what is wrong and believe in Allah. If only the People of the Scripture had believed, it would have been better for them. Among them are believers, but most of them are defiantly disobedient”*(Surah Ali ‘Imran, 3:110)

The purpose of the Quran is not to be rigid and dogmatic, but to guide humanity to find solutions to heal the whole person. It is focused on applying solutions through action, rather than blindly following spiritual precepts alone.

Ahmad Syalabi (Kamal, 1997) stated that the Prophet Muhammad SAW had ordered the prisoners of wars to teach a group of Muslim children as redemption for their freedom from captivity of Muslim army during the opening of Mecca. The researchers believes that Islamic principles, which are based on Quran and Hadith are the best approach for family issues and social disturbances. In fact, by exploring the Quran, the Sirah of the Prophet and his traditions, as well as the biographies of the Prophet's companions, it provided detailed instructions for implementing a successful counselling process.

Apparently, the researchers fully agree with Hassan (1990) at which the approach and practice of United States (US) counselling was not appropriate to be practiced by the Malaysian counsellors. This is due to the contradictions of culture, education, belief and faith with Islamic Malay culture in Malaysia. The findings also proved that all participants executed Islamic approaches in handling any types of family issues.

For instance, participant E said,

*“I have used many Islamic techniques rather than Western technique. However, I am not denying the Western theory like Bowlby Attachment Theory, which is from Object Relation Therapy. ‘Transference and counter-transference’ is the main technique that I have used. Maybe I could say that I only use 40% of this Western technique...”*

There were a few participants who gave their views on the Western approaches and how they adapted Islamic ways in the interview, one of them was participant B who said,

*"I think for the Western approaches, the theories are okay but they focus on emotional, cognitive and behaviour. However, these approaches do not complete the helping process by strengthening the spiritual area. So, when I already use the Western approach that focuses on the emotions, thoughts and behaviour, I complete and enhance it with the strengthening of spiritual side."*

Meanwhile, participant C said,

*"That is all about Western approach, but I adapt to spiritual approach. For example, in the form of prayer to Allah, this is our religion, right? I have used many spiritual approaches and used the verses of the Qur'an in accordance with client issues such as patience; I take in Surah al-Baqarah".*

## 5. Conclusion

This paper has discussed the existence of social diseases of today and the need for proper treatment in solving family issues. It has also examined the religious counselling and spirituality management in solving family issues. This study has also explored and evaluated the effectiveness of family counselling process by implementing religious values and spirituality management in solving family issues. It has also looked into the selected professional counsellors who were involved directly in family counselling on their views and stances in implementing and including the religious values during their sessions with clients.

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